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AUTHOR Bartelo, Dennise M.
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the success of a university based reading clinic conducted in the summer of 1979. Twenty-one students, in grades two through nine, participated in the clinic. Each student was pretested using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT) and then assigned to one of four graduate students. An individual educational plan was prepared for each student and lessons were designed to emphasize specific reading skills. The students were tested at the end of the month-long session using an alternate form of the WRMT. The majority of individual scores on the WRMT posttest indicated some reading skill achievement gains, specifically in the areas of word identification, letter identification, word attack, word comprehension, and passage comprehension. (FL)

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DOES THE CLINIC WORK? AN INVESTIGATION OF REMEDIAL
READING INSTRUCTION AND PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT

by

Dennise M. Bartelo

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Dr. Nancy Burris

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Incarnate Word College

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The question of, "why Johnny can't read?" has been an important issue in education since the decade of the 1960s. Efforts to foster achievement in this basic skill have led the educational system to respond by developing compensatory programs and remedial reading services.

Remedial reading services are often evaluated in their instruction by the degrees of improvement demonstrated by the participating students in their standardized test scores. How effective, effective as defined by this evaluation, are the remedial reading services shown in research studies? Does the skills of the instructor, the instructional methods used, and the attitudes of the readers effect reading skill achievement gains? The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of remedial reading services as analyzed in research studies, and present data of the summer 1979 reading clinic held at Incarnate Word College.

The Remedial Reading Program

Bliesmer (1962) defines remedial reading instruction as "instruction given to pupils who have been identified as deficient in grade level progress in reading, and are in need of supplementary services to achieve their reading

grade potential" (p. 344). The general aims of a remedial program are:

to help each pupil improve his/her reading skills, so as to experience greater satisfaction in school work; to aid pupils in acquiring the basic reading skills of functional literacy; and to make reading a more enjoyable experience (Newman, 1969, p. 544).

The development of a remedial reading program, as outlined by the California State Department of Education (1978) involves the following processes:

1. diagnosis of the reading behaviors of each student
2. the prescription of instruction to remove reading deficiencies
3. individualized instruction to meet the reading needs, strengths, and interests of the students
4. continuous opportunity for reading in a variety of materials
5. matching materials and equipment to the reading needs and interests of the students.
6. modification and flexibility of instruction to ensure continuous progress in meeting objectives.
7. the development of a comprehensive evaluation plan
8. implementation of evaluation activities
9. dissemination of information to students, parents, and involved administrators (pp.7-15).

Ratekin (1979) has stated that success in learning to read has been found to be related to the degree that instructional procedures match the attention, processing, and response styles of the learner. The learning styles of the students present a particular demand for specialized pro-

cedures (p. 454). Balow, Fuchs, and Kasbohm (1978) reported that school systems and clinics have offered programs for years to remediate a reading disability, under various labels such as remedial reading, minimal brain dysfunction, educational handicap, or learning disability (p. 24). Belmont and Belmont (1978) revealed that the underlying assumption of these programs has been the concern that without intervention, these children would remain poor readers, and therefore need to receive remediation in some type of clinical setting (p. 32).

The Development of Clinics

In 1896, Lightner Witmer developed the first psycho-educational clinic to deal with children's learning disabilities. The Education Development Laboratories Inc. in 1960 estimated 234 remedial clinics in the United States in existence at that time. This amount has at least doubled in the past years. Clinics operate under many different titles, such as child guidance centers, psycho-educational facilities, reading improvement centers, learning labs, reading clinics, and others. A variety of approaches are used in the teaching methods of the clients, who are served in an environment consisting of small

learning centers, offices, as well as a reception room for parents.

Kolson and Kaluger (1966) outlined three particular types of clinics: the commercial, which focuses on the training of a particular reading skill; the public school clinic, which is under the direction of teachers with a variety of backgrounds, and is basically skill centered in reference to the basal program; and the university reading clinic, which is primarily concerned with training teachers to help children with learning disabilities (p. 103).

The focus in this study will be on the latter two types mentioned above.

Instructional Approaches of Programs

Remedial reading programs operate under a variety of instructional approaches. Some Programs base their instruction entirely upon one method. Others operate under a particular management of skills systems, and still others draw their instruction from a variety of sources, based upon the needs of the clients being served.

In analyzing research studies, many programs demonstrate success using one particular instructional approach and method. Balow, Fuchs, and Kasbohn (1978) tested an

analytic-phonetic based approach at a Basic Skill Center in Minneapolis. Reading was taught by analyzing printed words for recurring visual patterns of letters. Thirty children were selected from the inner city schools from grades four to six to participate in this method. After forty hours of instruction by two reading specialists and eight aides, the results, measured by the Gates-MacGinitie test, shown by the pupils were gains on the average of five months for every month of participation in the program.

In another study by Ratekin (1979), the Oralographic Reading Program was found to be successful with identified learning disabled children with reading problems. The children were from Massachusetts, Missouri, and New Jersey elementary schools, and used sound discs and tapes of lessons, along with a "Talking Typewriter" for instruction. Each child gained at least seven months in reading scores, using this program, on the Gates McKellop and Gates MacGinitie tests.

John Borsa (1975) investigated the effects of a language experience approach on reading achievement with children from Missouri, in comparison with a phono-visual approach. After sixteen weeks and sixty-four hours of

instruction of disabled readers in a clinical setting, a statistically significant difference in favor of the language experience approach was found to exist after analysis of test score gains. A language experience approach, used in a summer reading Title I program in Bay City, Michigan, was also found to be successful in achieving reading gains, in a study by Garner, Meeth, and Schultz (1977).

In a Rutgers University Reading Clinic, children from grades three through seven were given instruction in touch-typing to improve their reading skills. This study by Sakiey (1975) also found significant gains in reading test scores.

An article in Instructor Magazine describes two successful programs developed by Adams and Reid. "Success," a program in beginning reading and writing, developed by Anne Adams (1978) for first graders in North Carolina, has found that through the daily reading of everyday printed materials, such as grade level magazines, books, and newspapers, 400 first graders in seventeen inner-city schools in a three year study demonstrated a total 87 percent increase on test scores. Ethna Reid (1978), who is director of the Exemplary Reading Center in Salt Lake City, Utah,

integrates a total language arts curriculum in a system of mastering sequential outlined skills, and has seen her students' tests scores improve.

No one approach or method has been designated by research to be successful with all children in any given situation. G. W. Bond (1952) suggested that children with reading disabilities require instruction based on and adapted to their needs, and are not likely to profit successfully from any instruction if it is not given at least as often as three times weekly. Studies by Bruce Balow (1965) have shown that reading disability tends to be reduced during the time that help is received in the form of remedial services.

Attitudes and Aspects of the Instructional Environment

R. Darrell Morris (1979) states that

learning or not learning to read is a product of the interaction between an individual child and his or her instructional environment. A child does not learn to read in a vacuum, and understanding the reading acquisition process must include an analysis of the environmental factors which facilitate or impede that process (p. 497).

Very little research has been directed toward the relationship between classroom atmosphere and reading

attitudes, as noted by Alexander and Filler (1976). Cleworth (1958) considered classroom atmosphere, including pleasant surroundings, a cooperative spirit within the group, adequate and appropriate materials, and an organized study plan important aspects in attitude formation. Healy (1963) examined two heterogeneous groups of fifth graders and used discussion, sociodrama, paintings, creative writing, and questionnaires to evaluate and assess reading experiences. A large proportion of the fifth graders, who had poor attitudes toward reading, had been in initial classroom environments where they had been forced to learn to read in a negative atmosphere. Bullen (1970) found that a special program, based on wide exposure to variety of books, positively affected the attitudes of children in grades one through five of limited economic and cultural backgrounds.

The teacher is an important factor in the instructional environment. McKeon and McKeon (1978) found that students who received skill reinforcement directly from a teacher, developed a more positive attitude toward reading, than students who received similar reinforcement through tape-recorded lessons. Kemper (1969) is cited in a book by

Alexander and Filler as stating that what a teacher is, what he/she does, and what he/she expects may affect the classroom environment and the attitudes of the students.

"One of the prerequisites for becoming a good remedial reading teacher is successful classroom teaching in reading" (Kolson and Kaluger, 1966, p. 5). A broad background of knowledge in reading aids the teacher in adapting her teaching to the needs of her students. Ethna Reid (1978) posed the question of "why are some teachers, with the same background, the same materials, and the same random sample of children more successful than others in teaching reading?" She decided, as stated in an article in Instructor, September 1978, that it was the way a teacher teaches that makes the difference, and the ability of the teacher to break down their instruction into sequential units (p. 114). Communication between a child's classroom teacher and the remedial reading instructor and an integrated program of remedial reading coordinated with regular classroom instruction, is suggested by Morris (1979) as means to improve the consistency and effectiveness of remedial reading instruction.

Having previously discussed many studies of remedial

programs and aspects of their instruction, this study will now focus upon an examination of the Summer 1979 Reading Clinic at Incarnate Word College.

The Incarnate Word Reading Clinic:
An In-depth Study

How much of an improvement in reading skills can be expected in a short period of time? In a study by Hicks, Hicks, Kellogg, and Honnen (1968), the relationship between the amount of instructional time and the degree of reading achievement was studied in an experiment involving ninety-two third graders and seventy fourth grade students from middle and upper middle class neighborhoods in seven elementary schools. The students were assigned to remedial reading instruction on the basis of teacher recommendations and screening. According to their schedule adaptation, the students were placed in one of three experimental group conditions of attending two, three, or four thirty minute remedial reading sessions. The remedial reading program was directed by three experienced and trained special reading teachers, whose instructional emphasis focused on visual and auditory phonics, comprehension skills, and individualized instruction based upon the specific needs of the

children. A maximum number of five students were present during the remedial session. A pretest and posttest, based on the Pupil Progress Series Comprehension test, revealed that the number of reading sessions had a significant effect on the reading level of the third grade students, and was not significant with the fourth grade students' achievement.

A study by Theodore A. Buerger (1968) tested the effects of remedial reading instruction; the long-term post remedial educational progress; and the attitudes of the participating students. The research took place at the Lakewood Schools Reading Center, where seventy-two students of comparable intelligence quotients, reading test scores, and reading letters grades, involved in grades three through seven, received fifty hours or more of formal reading instruction from instructors at the center. A non-remedial sample of the same comparability, also under-achieving in reading, was also set up of seventy-two students, who did not receive formal remedial reading instruction during the same period. Several instructional approaches, based on the needs of the children of the remedial group, were used, along with self evaluation devices

to foster self concept, confidence, and success. Several assessment instruments were used before, during, and after remedial instruction, such as the SRA Mental Abilities Test, the Stanford Reading Test, Gates Reading Test, the Cooperative English test and others. Students who received remedial instruction demonstrated significant post-remedial reading gains, but little significance was found in long-term comparisons of progress in English and Social Studies. A favorable attitude in the remedial group about reading was found to be slightly more significant than the long-term attitudes of the control group.

The previous studies recognized the gains demonstrated in reading achievement by students involved in a variety of instructional methods in remedial reading. The amount of instructional time ranged from fifty hours, to instruction received over a total school year. The teachers involved were trained reading teachers in a public school and private clinic instructors, whose backgrounds were not described. What effect will instruction, given by graduate students, majoring in reading specialization, have upon reading achievement of participating students enrolled for one summer session at the Incarnate Word College Reading Clinic?

Method

Information concerning the college reading clinic for the summer was distributed to the public through the public relations office of the college, as well as by students, teachers, and telephone inquiries. Four graduate students and one designated graduate assistant enrolled in the Practicum course. Each of the five were certified Texas teachers, possessing at least three years of classroom experience. Three of the graduate students were working on their Master's degree in Education, in conjunction with a Reading Specialist certificate. Two graduate students, already possessed a Master's degree, and were working to obtain the Reading Specialist Certificate. The summer session of the clinic would offer twenty-four hours of instruction for \$240.00, and was scheduled to meet Monday through Friday; June 11, 1979 to July 5, 1979, with a holiday scheduled for the fourth of July. Two instructional sessions were arranged, each consisting of one hour and fifteen minutes. The sessions were scheduled at the following times in the morning, 9:00-10:15, and 10:30-11:45.

Subjects

Twenty-one students registered for the summer clinic, sixteen boys and five girls, ranging in grade placement from second through ninth. The students came from various private, parochial, and public school districts from the San Antonio area. Each of the students was given a pre-test before remedial instruction initiated, using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT), Form A or Form B. The tests were administered by the college reading professor or by one of the two graduate students who had volunteered their services to aid in testing.

Procedure

The four graduate students were responsible for a total number of five students, with no more than three students under their instruction per period. The graduate assistant was responsible for one of the students who had registered late for the session, and worked in conjunction with the other instructors, providing assistance to them and to their students as needed. The college reading professor supervised the clinic instruction, and was available for daily consultations.

The clinic was arranged into learning centers, with stations assigned to each of the instructors. A variety of instructional materials were available to the instructors. Every attempt was made to create an enjoyable environment that encouraged improvement in reading and attitudes. The children were engaged in purposeful reading activities according to the objectives of their individual educational plans. Feedback was given to the students each week, in the form of certificates from the Good Apple Publishing Company. Records were kept by the students and the instructors concerning the progress made in skill areas. A fifteen minute period was built into the schedule as free reading time, using a book chosen by the individuals, so that the students could practice applying the skills that they were learning to reading materials. Some of the many instructional materials used during the sessions were; the Barnell Loft Specific Skill Series, the Dexter-Westbrook Skill Series, the Michigan Language Tracking Program, Reader's Digest Skill Series, Controlled Reader, Bill Martin Read Alongs, and Cambridge Skill Builders Workbooks. At the end of the session, a posttest was given to each of the students, using an alternate form of

the WRMT, to obtain posttest data from the session. Each instructor then prepared a written report in detail of the materials used and the objectives mastered during the summer session. This information could then be used as a source of information for the student's teacher the following school year.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF GRADE LEVEL PRE AND POST TEST SCORES

		Pretest	Posttest	Mean	Pretest	Posttest
*Independent	N	Mean	Mean	Gain	S.D.	S.D.
Reading Level	21	3.60	4.19	.59	2.01	2.3
	N	Pretest	Posttest	Mean	Pretest	Posttest
*Instructional	21	3.60	5.85	.51	3.3	3.8
Reading Level						

NOTE: Standard error of difference in pre and post independent tests - .2
Standard error of difference in pre and post instructional tests - 1.1
(Independent reading gains found to be significant in relationship to gains that could be attained by chance.)

*Independent R.L. - grade level of reading material that can be read without assistance.

*Instructional R. L. - grade level of reading material from which a child can be taught.

Results

Table 1 presents the basic pretest and posttest data.

Although mastery tests are not really concerned about

differences between individuals, but rather mastery of units taught, the scores can be evaluated as to the average gain per individual. Individual scores demonstrated a range of no gain to a gain of two years and two months in the independent reading level. Instructional level in scores showed a range of one month loss to a three year, three month gain. An analysis of covariance and calculation of the correlation coefficient of stability presented no significant differences in the scores, however, this was expected due to the small amount of subjects used in the study. An analysis of the progress reports written by the individual instructors indicated a mastery of three instructional skill-related objectives by each student in the program. Each of the students also charted a card for each book that they read during the session, with the number of books ranging from one to ten books read. Attitudes of the students were not measured by a formal instrument, but an observed change was noted in several of the students by their individual instructors in reference to their feelings of self-concept in relationship to reading, the type of reinforcement needed for accomplished work, and social peer-group work relationships. Statistically,

The amount of gain in the independent level was .39 greater than could be expected through chance, with the instructional level change not relevant statistically.

Conclusions

The overall consensus of the instructors was that the reading clinic was successful. The majority of individual scores on the WRMT did indicate some reading skill achievement gains in the levels of letter identification, word identification, word attack, word comprehension, and passage comprehension. The limitations of this study involved the small population sampled, the various levels of intelligence scores present, and the short amount of instructional time tested. The gains achieved concluded the results of Balow (1965) and Buerger (1968), who also found that the majority of students in remedial reading instruction do demonstrate immediate post-remedial gains. Since time was allotted for skill practice in regular reading material, it is hoped that the students will be able to apply their reading gains in regular classroom instruction in the future.

Suggestions for Future Research

It is suggested that research continue to investigate the area of learning disabled readers, and what type of instruction will bring about the best results. How students can readily apply their reading gains independently is also an area for further inquiry. The fact that the basic two studies reviewed as a preliminary discussion to the college clinic were not relatively current is also an indication for researchers to use the knowledge of past studies to find new insights into remedial reading services.

Summary

In this study, a variety of remedial reading programs were reviewed, and their successful achievement gains noted. However, it is commonly found that educational innovations result in short-term changes in performance. Balow (1965) studied the immediate gains indicated, but concluded that continued growth in reading after treatment seems to depend upon continued long-term attention to the problem. Buerger (1968) states in his conclusions that, ". . . what is needed after a rather intensive remedial period, is provision for supportive reading assistance

during the follow-up period" (p. 333). Reports by remedial reading teachers will generally reveal a roster of students very similar from year to year. Also, skills mastered in the remedial session need to be reinforced in the regular classroom for mastery to be maintained and increased. Teacher attitudes and aspects of the instructional environment need to be supportive to the remedial student, who has continually met failure in the classroom. Bliesmer (1962) recommends an average yearly gains in evaluation to further validate the results obtained. Attention by remedial reading teachers should also be given to the actual amount of pupil participation in instruction and actual amount of instruction given per session. Since the institution of federal legislation for compensatory programs in 1964 and 1965, a large amount of federal funds have been spent in providing remedial reading services. Educators will be held accountable for the use of these funds.

There is no one cure for the problems of remedial readers, and one session of remedial instruction can not provide all the answers for students to achieve in reading. The effectiveness of the reading clinic depends, then, upon

a variety of factors and is just one step in the solution to the problems of remedial readers. A follow-up of these skills is needed; application of these skills to classroom instruction, and continued work by the student and the teachers in aiding students to achieve their reading potentials.

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